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ABSTRACT

This evaluation report of an attendance project in Portland, Oregon, public schools describes goals, methods, and results for 1985-86. The introduction states objectives of identifying, contacting, and counseling students leaving school or attending irregularly, with the purpose of guiding them into school or alternative educational programs. A methodology section outlines data gathering, which involved collecting individual student information and responses of staff. Evaluation processes were designed to learn the following: how truant students are identified, school officials' perceptions of the project, and project influence on students' return. Findings are summarized in a project description, best and worst case scenarios, and placement and data analysis. Tables list referrals by grade and month, distribution by grade, grade and age, geographic region, ethnic group, sex, and reenrollment. Reenrollment rates and problems are discussed, including space and staff limitations. Conclusions report that the project's success was jeopardized by difficult home situations even when families were interested in cooperating, and also by ineffective legal enforcement. Recommendations include the following: (1) determination of adequate staff for projected cases, (2) revision of student data methods, and (3) reappraisal of the high school focus to include middle school dropout problems. Appendices provide Oregon Revised Statutes defining truancy and parental responsibilities, as well as copies of news and periodical articles. (CJH)

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EVALUATION REPORT

PROJECT RETURN 1985 — 1986

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Portland Public Schools
Portland, Oregon
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October, 1986

EA 019 350

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INTRODUCTION

In August, 1985, the Portland Public Schools initiated what has been the most comprehensive and direct response to the problem of school attendance to date.

Using Oregon Revised Statutes (O.R.S.) 339.065 and 339.080 as the basis in law for defining "truancy" and delineating parental responsibilities thereto, Project Return was designed and implemented as a remedy. The student population that elects to leave school prior to completion of grade 12 is often considered "at risk". Project Return identifies, counsels, and guides these students back into school or an alternative educational program. The urgency and timeliness of the district's commitment to "at risk" youth is unquestioned. The fact that many of the students contacted through Project Return are dropping out before the completion of middle school magnifies the problem. The objective is simple; but the task immense.

The primary objective of Project Return is to identify, contact, and counsel students who have left school or are failing to attend regularly. Commensurate with the direct contact of students is notification of the parents and a review of the applicable laws. An informal assessment which seeks to isolate the causes for excessive absence from school is among the tools used to ascertain the basis for recommending re-enrollment or selection of a more appropriate educational program.

Sustained return to school is a joint venture between Project Return, the schools, the parents, and local law enforcement. The roles and interaction among these groups are discussed as part of the project evaluation.

Project Return is staffed by one full-time coordinator - Alcena Boozer, one para-professional attendance counselor - Scott Cunningham, and one half-time secretary. The project operates under the auspices of the Office of Student Services and is supervised by Carolyn Sheldon. This staff discovered its challenge as it attempted to address truancy across the entire 152 square miles of the Portland School District. The constraints of a small staff amplified the enormity of the task and the scope of student truancy within the Portland Public Schools. Continually, more students were identified than staff time and resources could address.

Project Return was new and its strategies untried. During the implementation, the project molded and remolded its strategies, priorities, and its identification and utilization of resources.

The evaluation report displays relevant data, describes the project and the strategies that were employed, and reports the results of Project Return in the 1985-86 school year.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation employs the multiple methods of interviews, unobtrusive measures, and the use of descriptive statistics. These data are used to interpret the impact and summarize the implementation of Project Return in its inaugural year.

The collection and compilation of individual student information supplemented with anecdotal responses of staff comprise the basic methodology.

Monthly records of referrals, student contacts, descriptive data, counseling sessions, and student placement were forwarded to the Office of Student Services. Project Return staff and school administrative personnel served as sources of information.

The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the extent to which Project Return was successfully implemented and its objectives were met. The study questions which drive the evaluation are:

1. Who are the students identified as truant?
2. By what means are truants being identified?
3. To what extent are students voluntarily leaving school?
4. What are the perception of schools officials regarding the value, efficacy, etc. of Project Return?
5. To what extent is Project Return effecting students' return to educational programs?

6. To what extent do community resources play in re-enrollment?

7. What elements inhibit the effective implementation of Project Return?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Project Description

Project Return has been housed in the portable buildings at the old Monroe High School site in Portland's near East Side since August, 1985. The project began as an experiment to determine the most efficacious delivery of support services for the population of students who, for whatever reasons, were identified as "truant". A program that pursues the truant student for other than punitive reasons was an innovation. And, while the Portland Police Bureau was initially an integral part of the planning, the responsibility eventually shifted to the project coordinator and her staff of one.

Students with a history of enrollment in the Portland Public Schools are eligible and enter the program by one of three routes:

1. Referral by a school administrator based on eight unexcused half days within a twenty day period (ORS 339.065); or

2. Self-referral by the student; or

3. Referral by parent/guardian of chronically absent students.

When students are identified by Project Return staff, school administration, or local law enforcement officials, their attendance is verified through school records and a referral is generated by school officials when appropriate.

Verified enrollment and attendance information is essential to effective follow-up on the counselor caseload. Many of the families that experience truancy are transient. This adds to the difficulty in securing up-to-date enrollment data.

Project return provided a range of responses to truant students. The project attempted to focus on an "appropriate" response and evaluated each case individually. The project's priority was to re-enroll the students in school. However, project staff found, in some cases, that basic needs called for pre-eminent attention. Thus, a number of families were directed to social service agencies for food, clothing, shelter, or professional counseling as part of Project Return's strategy for re-enrollment prior to direct re-enrollment efforts.

Typically, telephone contact was the initial follow-up to a referral. The purpose of the contact is to determine the status of the student and the cause(s) for excessive absence from school. The discussions are often with the student, but ultimately involve the parent/guardian. The phone contact is followed by an appointment either at home or at the Project Return offices. The objective of the interview is to achieve a more in-depth assessment of the student's status and potential for a successful return to an educational program. The complexity of delivering the services may be best described with illustrations.

Best Case Scenarios

A) A family has recently moved into the district and simply failed to enroll the student in a new school. This student may have been identified by local law enforcement or project staff, and brought directly to Project Return office.

B) A student may have been suspended from school, interpreted his/her suspension as an expulsion, and not acted upon his/her right to return to school within five days. In these cases, the referral will have originated with the school upon a review of attendance data. Perhaps a simple phone call would alert the student to the need to return to school. However, it is not uncommon for these students' homes to be without a telephone, and school building resources are rarely

spent in direct visits to the home. In these cases, the process can be delayed indefinitely. Project Return staff respond with a visit. The family is usually happy to be informed, particularly at the elementary level, and re-enrollment procedures are initiated.

C) In other cases, the basic five-day suspension may be extended by the student who elects not to return to what may have been a threatening or uncomfortable environment. Working parents may or may not be aware of the student's absence or even the suspension from school. Again, parental contact and providing information about school procedures is typically sufficient for remedy provided that school officials are made aware and can offer reasonable assurances for safety and fair handling of future problems.

D) In still other cases, the students of working parents, particularly single parents, remain home to care for non school-age siblings because the cost of day care is prohibitive. This is compounded when school-age younger siblings are ill. Parents often perceive their options as constrained. Parents don't always weigh the older child's education against the convenience of at-home child care.

Worst Case Scenarios

A) Occasionally, the effort to return the student to school is met with resistance. Parents as well as children

effectively evade or flatly refuse to cooperate. When the threat of the law is introduced, it is inconsistently regarded because, in fact, truancy is a low priority matter, and excepting serious persistence on either the part of police, or the Project Return staff little change is easily effected.

B) A 'worst case' requires numerous calls, visits, and education for the parent(s) or guardians before re-enrollment can be effected. This consumes much staff time. Sometimes the necessary persistence is considered an invasion into private family matters, and the chasm between family practices and district objectives widens. Because responses sometimes come from destitute, chemically dependent, or hostile people, these matters must be handled with exceptional tact and diplomacy; sometimes with mere strength of character.

Placement

Project Return provides a three step procedure to re-orient students toward the goal of completing school.

Step One: Assessment of referral.
Step Two: Identification and contact with student and family.
Step Three: Interview, status report, determination of appropriate placement.

The placement procedure is a negotiated agreement with the neighborhood school administrator, the school last attended, or an appropriate educational alternative. Even when students are

eager to return to school, placement may be delayed because of inadequate space in the desired program. It is an unfortunate reality that such obstacles can contribute to the student electing to remain out of school or revert to truancy.

Once a student is identified, interviewed, advised, and placed in a school or program, Project Return assumes a limited monitoring function maintaining contact with the student on a periodic basis. Often, additional support services both in school and in the private sector are identified to assist the student, and the school staff is alerted to the student/family need for support. Lacking project resources for full-time follow-up, the possibility of recidivism becomes more likely.

The most frequent respondents for alternative placement and/or support have been: Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center, Albina Youth Opportunity School, Youth Service Centers (North/Northeast/Northwest), and the Private Industry Council.

Data Analysis

Tables 1.0 - 5.0 reflect the composite data which tell who is served by Project Return. It should be noted, however, the data reveals only those students who were enrolled and truant in 1985-86. The data may not reflect the students who dropped out or discontinued school between 1985-86 and the previous school year. The tables that follow show the statistical summary of the data:

Table 1.0

PROJECT RETURN REFERRALS BY GRADE AND MONTH - 1985-86

	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	Totals
K	0	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	5
1	4	3	3	1	2	5	5	1	24
2	1	0	3	1	1	7	1	1	15
3	2	0	4	4	2	4	2	1	19
4	3	1	4	3	1	4	2	1	19
5	2	1	3	0	1	3	6	0	16
6	3	5	5	2	2	7	7	0	31
7	8	4	5	6	2	9	6	0	40
8	13	8	3	12	8	9	12	0	65
9	6	30	11	23	15	16	24	2	127
10	9	21	18	12	7	5	12	4	88
11	3	9	6	4	1	0	5	0	28
12	1	2	6	2	0	0	0	1	12
TOTALS	55	84	73	71	42	69	84	11	489

Table 1.1

DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECT RETURN REFERRALS BY GRADE (Composite)

GRADES	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Totals	Percentage of total
K-5	12	5	19	10	7	23	18	4	98	20.0%
6-8	24	17	13	20	12	25	25	0	136	27.8%
9-12	19	62	41	41	23	21	41	7	255	52.2%
*7-10	(36)	(63)	(36)	(53)	(32)	(39)	(54)	(6)	(319)	(65.2)%
*TOTALS	55	84	73	71	42	69	84	11	489	100.0%

*Totals do not include grade 7-10 category

Table 2.0

"PROJECT RETURN" 1985-86 REFERRALS BY AGE AND MONTH

Age	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	Totals
6	3	1	3	2	0	3	3	0	15
7	2	2	2	0	2	5	4	1	18
8	1	0	4	3	1	4	1	0	14
9	1	0	3	3	3	5	3	1	19
10	3	2	4	2	0	4	1	2	18
11	1	4	3	0	1	1	6	0	16
12	6	4	4	2	3	8	7	0	34
13	11	5	8	12	4	10	6	0	56
14	10	16	4	13	7	8	16	0	74
15	7	22	12	15	12	15	19	2	104
16	6	18	8	12	7	6	13	4	74
17	4	9	12	5	2	0	5	1	38
18	0	1	6	2	0	0	0	0	9
TOTALS	55	84	73	71	42	69	84	11	489

Table 3.0

DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECT RETURN STUDENTS BY GEOGRAPHIC REGION (CITY OF PORTLAND)

	Number	Percentage
North	183	37.4%
Northeast	142	29.0%
Northwest	20	4.1%
Southeast	115	23.5%
Southwest	29	5.9%
	489	100.0%

Table 4.0

DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECT RETURN STUDENTS BY ETHNIC GROUP

	Number	Percentage	District Number	District Percentage
Asian	14	2.9%	3,864	7.5%
African-American	123	25.2%	7,579	14.9%
European-American	320	65.5%	37,575	73.7%
Hispanic	14	2.9%	1,028	2.0%
Native American	18	3.7%	957	1.9%
	489	100.0%	51,003	100.0%

Table 5.0

DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECT RETURN STUDENTS BY SEX

	Number	Percentage
Males	258	52.8%
Females	231	47.2%
	489	100.0%

Table 6.0

DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECT RETURN STUDENTS SERVICED/RE-ENROLLED IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

	N	%
Returned to Regular Program	207	42.3
Returned to Alternative Program	85	17.4
	292	59.7

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

Not Returned to Educational Program		
A. Awaiting Placement (Post-interview)	111	22.7
B. Awaiting Assessment (Pre-interview)	23	4.7
C. Refused Services	16	3.3
D. Withdrawn/Moved/Transferred	40	8.2
E. Runaway	7	1.4
	197	40.3%
TOTAL	489	100.0%

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The K-5 population does not typically comprise dropout data. The 98 students in K-5 that were serviced by Project Return in 1985--86 represent 20% of all clients. These students are officially truant, but because their non-participation in school is typically circumstantial rather than willful, it may be inaccurate to classify them with the traditional "dropout". They might be best described as "victim" of transient, unstable, or impoverished circumstances. When Project Return staff have contacted parents/guardians of such children, infirmation about school procedures for enrollment and the pertinent laws, referral to family services organizations, or transportation assistance usually remedies the situation.

The data in Table 1.1 show that 319 Project Return students representing 65.2% of all clients are in grades 7 through 10 inclusively. The data in Table 1.0 show grade 9 as having the greatest number (127) suggest that the transition into high school or ages 13,14,15 (Table 2.0) present difficulties that cause truancy to be more probable. At issue here is the increasingly popular definition of "dropout" in the Sate of Oregon which limits that descriptor to "... those who enter the ninth grade..." and fail to graduate.

As students progress in age and grade from the middle school level (Tables 1.0 & 2.0), there is less incidence of truancy. As upper grade data is examined, however, it must be considered whether fewer truant students indicates greater maturity, fewer

problems, or whether a number of students who leave school in the late middle grades never return. The potential exists for students who would be identified in the 11th and 12th grades to no longer exist in the general population.

The geographical distribution (Table 3.0) reports that approximately two thirds (66.4%) of all Project Return clients attended school in North and Northeast Portland. When compared with the general population, we find approximately 51% of all district students attending school in those regions of the district, suggesting a disproportional number of students at risk in these schools.

The field experiences of Project Return staff included home site visits and interviews with parents/guardians. In the course of these visits, staff have observed consistent patterns of what appears to be limited financial resources. This suggests a possible correlation between low socio-economic status (SES) and truancy.

The distribution of Project Return students by ethnic category (Table 4.0) shows another aspect of disproportionality. Hispanic and American Indian students representing 2.0% and 1.9% of Portland District students respectively, comprise 2.9% and 3.7% of the students serviced by Project Returnin 1985-86 (Table 4.0).

A more detectable discrepancy is evident among African American student data. They represent 14.9% in the aggregate of district enrollment and make up 25.2% of the clients serviced by the project. Although the distribution of these students by grade, sex, and geographic distribution is indiscernible from the raw data , it seems consistent with the Project Return data as a whole. (Tables 1.0,3.0,5.0)

Students serviced by Project Return are found to be clustered in grades 7 through 10; equally divided among males and females; and largely centered in North and Northeast Portland. Interviews with project staff verify this extrapolated interpretation, and add that low SES is a probable contributor to the complex reasons for truancy among any group.

Both white and Asian students showed slightly lower participation in the Project Return (65.5% and 2.9%) than their respective numbers in the aggregate student population (73.7% and 7.5%).

'RETURN' ON INVESTMENT

The primary objective of Project Return is the re-enrollment of students in school or in an appropriate educational program. Table 6.0 reflects the rates of placement and the disposition of the 489 students referred to the project between November, 1985 and June, 1986.

Project Return accomplished the re-enrollment of students in schools and alternative programs at a success rate of 59.7% (Table 6.0). Subsequent to contact, assessment interview, and placement negotiation, 207 students were returned to the regular school program; 85 were introduced into alternative educational programs for a total of 292 students. This 59.7% represents a majority of all students serviced by the project.

The description of how that objective was accomplished reveals more than the statistics can convey. Alarming as it may seem, the 20% of students in primary school who were identified as truant were typically handled by introducing the family to the resources, procedures for enrollment, and pertinent laws. The re-enrollment process was commonly hampered by family instability, frequent moving, or misunderstandings of school policy or procedures. Once attended to by Project Return staff, re-enrollment was a matter of course.

The middle and high school grades create a much more complex set of variables in attempting to "return" students to school or an alternative program. Among the difficulties which plague the operation of Project Return are:

A. The expenditure of significant time/personnel resources which are subsequently obviated by an unforseen change in the student's home, family, or mental/emotional situation. A simple loss of job, a new pregnancy, or a change in residence can have

catastrophic effects on the student's return to school and nullify the efforts of the project to date in effecting their re-enrollment.

B. The limitations of a small staff become most evident in the choice that has to be made between the delivery of services and the keeping of adequate records which facilitate tracking students. Project Return elected to get to as many students as possible. In so doing, with such a limited staff, made it nearly impossible to update data on students in ways that would be ideal. Additionally, the limited ability to track students meant that even when students were re-enrolled, little follow-up could be managed to assure that the same costly resources would not have to be spent again on the same student a short time later.

C. The lack of available space in alternative programs or the lack of alternative programs altogether interfere with the delivery of services. This is the primary cause for the 22.7% of students served finishing the 1985-86 school year with resources exhausted and their 'awaiting placement' status (Table 6.0).

These elements are cited as a means of adding perspective to the successes and the shortfall of an undertaking like Project Return. The return on investment is hardly guaranteed, and with those limitations and variables, the project managed to return to school nearly 60% of 489 students identified as truant or out of school in 1985-86.

CONCLUSIONS

The numbers of students defined by Oregon Statutes as truant is substantial enough to warrant the district's commitment of resources on the problem of "school dropouts".

Project Return is an adequately structured response conceptually. It has successfully identified key elements of an elusive and challenging problem for school districts nationwide. It has targeted significant elements of the problem and directed resources to those elements in a efficient manner. It has further identified the obstacles in delivering services to client students. During its first year, it has lacked the necessary resources to respond to the numbers of students identified.

The identification of the range and the proportion of students in grades kindergarten through twelve is a significant piece of information for school planning and agenda setting. If it served no more purpose than to advise the board of education that there are a number of students at risk as early as the primary grades, it has served an important function. In providing alternatives and resources Project Return has instituted proactive strategies in place of traditional responses.

The staff was too small to adequately service the number of students who were identified as truant. There is evidence that more students than were contacted by the project are "at risk" and not attending school.

The reporting schedule and procedures between the project coordinator and the Office of Student Services were regularly maintained and sufficient for information and decision-making.

The credibility of Project Return as an effectual operation is jeopardized when:

1. The project identifies, contacts, counsels, and garners the cooperation of a student and the family and then cannot place the student due to a difficult return to the home school environment, or when limited space is available in a selected alternative program; or

2. The enforcement of statutory law as leverage to cause the parents to cooperate in sending/keeping the student in school cannot be effected.

Project Return found that the low priority of "truancy" as an offense (ORS 339.065) and the lack of consequences built into the failure of parents to comply with ORS 339.080 contributed to an ineffectual role by Portland Police in the project. Ultimately, their role could not be relied on to produce a desired effect.

The problem of truancy does not begin nor is it concentrated in the high school. The high school grades comprise just over half the students identified (Table 1.1). The late teens, "Jimmy Dean image" of the high school dropout fades in the face of the data and yields to a younger age group in grades 7 through 10 who make up nearly two-thirds (65.7%)of those identified (Table 1.1). A program which recognizes and invests resources to attend to this issue may prevent a greater number of "dropouts" in later years.

Economic circumstances accompany truancy. Although no data was kept on this factor, Project Return staff indicate a high incidence of evidence of poor homes, unemployed parent(s), single parent homes, and resource poor responses as common among the clients in Project return.

School administrators feel that Project Return is valuable. They are reserved, however, in their response to re-enrollment. Their confidence in the project does not match their lack of confidence in the student's ability to succeed after returning. They recognize the project's lack of resources to manage follow-up as a significant obstacle to successful re-enrollment. They either do not have or have not planned the reassignment of school counseling resources for the direct support of the 'returned' student.

The data that were kept on students lacked adequate definitive properties to provide a more careful scrutiny of the project and thus a more detailed analysis. This is not a fault, but a reflection of a reasonable choice to serve the greatest number of students rather than focus on record keeping. Still an adequate descriptive picture can be etched from the existing data. In subsequent operation years, it would be helpful to know which students were returned to schools and programs and remained and which did not. It would be valuable to know the ethnic breakdown by grade, age, and sex.

As an innovative programmatic approach, the results are promising. Students are early identified as truant. This may interrupt the development of a pattern of absences which interfere with learning and contribute to the long-term truancy problem. The experience of the project staff suggest that the earlier the student can be contacted, the better the chances for re-enrollment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One: A review of the ratio of project staff to the number of students served should occur for the purpose of determining the adequacy of staff assigned to the number of projected cases for 1986-87.

Recommendations (continued)

Two: Revise the means for keeping data on students. Attention should be given to electronic control of records and a fully flexible data base should be established.

Three: Consideration should be given to an appraisal of the "high school oriented" focus on dropout statistics. The middle school data in this report reflects an opportunity to prevent significant numbers of potential dropouts prior to chronic patterns of non-attendance developing before the completion of middle school.

Note: A transitional classroom is being established to house students temporarily while placement is being completed. This will have the effect of attending to student needs for an interim period thus reducing the prospect of a return to truant behavior, improving the quality of contact, and increasing the chances of a successful 'return' to school. Because Project Return students' needs are distinct, it seems prudent to supply an equally unique curriculum which addresses study skills, interpersonal skills, goal setting, and skills diagnosis to assure improved performance upon re-entry to a standard program or alternative educational program.

APPENDIX A:

Oregon Revised Statutes

ORS 339.065, 339.080

339.065 Estimates of attendance; irregular attendance; excused absences. (1) In estimating regular attendance for purposes of the compulsory attendance provisions of ORS 339.005 to 339.145, 339.410, 339.420 and 339.990, the principal or teacher shall consider all unexcused absences. Eight unexcused one-half day absences in any four-week period during which the school is in session shall be considered irregular attendance.

(2) An absence may be excused by a principal or teacher if the absence is caused by the pupil's sickness, by the sickness of some member of the pupil's family or by an emergency. A principal or teacher may also excuse absences for other reasons where satisfactory arrangements are made in advance of the absence.

(3) Any pupil may be excused from attendance by the district school board for a period not to exceed five days in a term of three months or not to exceed 10 days in any term of at least six months. Any such excuse shall be in writing directed to the principal of the school which the pupil attends. [1965 c.100 §281; 1973 c.728 §4]

339.070 [Repealed by 1963 c.544 §52]

339.080 Nonattendance notice to parents and school officials. (1) Except as provided in ORS 339.030, in case any parent or other person in parental relation fails to send any child under his control to the public school, the attendance supervisor, within 24 hours after notification from the proper authority of the failure, shall give formal written notice in person or by registered or certified mail to the parent or other person. The notice shall state that the child must appear at the public school on the next school day following the receipt of the notice. The notice shall inform the parent or other person that regular attendance at school must be maintained during the remainder of the school year.

(2) At the same time notice is given to the parent or other person, the attendance supervisor shall notify the city superintendent or principal, as suitable, of the fact of the notice. The superintendent or principal shall notify the attendance supervisor of any failure on the part of the parent or other person to comply with the notice. [Amended by 1965 c.100 §282]

APPENDIX B:

News Clippings - The Oregonian

June 9, 1986

Project Return aims at school dropouts

By CHRISTINE DECKER
Correspondent, The Oregonian

David Brown had been out of school for a year and a half. He spent most of that time sitting around the house, watching soap operas on television and eating, he said.

"I hardly went out because I knew they had truancy officers and I didn't want to get picked up," said Brown, 15. "But the system caught up with me, anyway, and that's when Project Return and Alcina Boozer started calling me at home."

Boozer is head of Project Return, a Portland Public Schools program to get dropouts back into school.

Last school year, Boozer and counselor Scott Cunningham contacted 466 dropouts, and 62 percent, or 288 students, decided to continue their educations.

Some refused help, some were referred to drug and alcohol programs, and some had moved, Cunningham said. Some got into the program late in the year and are waiting for placements, and some, age 16 or older, formally withdrew from school, he said.

In Brown's case, Boozer went to his Southeast Portland home to find out why he had dropped out and then tried to match his needs with an alternative school program.

"I dropped out, I guess, because I was too shy," Brown said. "I wanted to go back, but I was too lazy."

With Boozer's help, Brown entered an alternative program at Marshall High School where classes are small and the teachers can give more personal attention than students get in most high schools.

"They helped me to be more social. They also take it easy on students, and they're willing to help if you've got some problem," he said.

After half a year at Marshall, Brown will take some classes in the high school's regular program. He said he's listed as a junior "with sophomore credits."

"I don't think I'd have had much of a future if Alcina hadn't contacted me and got me back in school," he said. "I've made graduation a goal, and I'm going to try and make something of my life."

Two full-time staff members and three part-time mental health counselors have been added to the Project Return program, which has a goal of reaching 1,000 students this year.

School administrators, parents, friends and youth service centers may refer students to the program.

State law considers a student who misses more than eight half-days in a 20-day period as a dropout. Students are required to attend school until they are 16.

After a student is referred to the program, Cunningham said, staff members try to determine why he or she hasn't been attending school. Then, with the help of the school, they develop a plan that may include personal or family counseling, or may call for the student to attend an alternative school offering more one-to-one instruction than a larger high school, he said.

Of the 466 students contacted last year, 70 percent were younger than 16 years old. Fifty-six percent dropped out in the eighth, ninth or 10th grades, and 67 percent live in North or Northeast Portland.

The students are told some grim statistics by the counselors: 80 percent of the nation's prison population is made up of dropouts and future earning potential is tied to education.

"The more education we tell them, generally the more income someone earns," said Cunningham, who has a degree in criminology.

Most parents support the program's aim to get youngsters back in school, he said.

"They've tried to get their child going to school and have just gotten frustrated," Cunningham said. "Often, we have to teach parents some discipline techniques. Sometimes the students have to be monitored by a check-in system when they go to their school."

Most students want an education but drop out after experiencing social or academic problems, he said. Many are not reading at an appropriate grade level, which affects virtually all their classes.

"Once they've experienced some kind of academic failure — either in a subject or in not passing the whole year — they are more likely to drop out," Cunningham said. Some get involved in street life — drugs, prostitution or stealing — and begin believing they don't need an education to support themselves later in life, he said.

Many of the dropouts come from struggling families headed by a single parent, and other family members may have set a pattern of dropping out of school, Cunningham said.

"One of the most important parts of the program is letting the student know you care," he said. "Most feel an education is important — they just didn't know there are alternative schools and programs out there that would suit their learning style."

The Oregonian/BILL MURPHY

David Brown (left), 15, goes over his class schedule with Alcina Boozer, head of Portland Public Schools' Project Return.

Two-thirds of truant students are in grades 7-10

KATHIE DURBIN
the Oregonian staff

Two out of three Portland Public School students referred to Project Return for habitual truancy this year were in grades seven through 10, and 10 out of three lived in North or Northeast Portland.

Out of 445 students referred during the seven-month period the program was in operation, 292 were white, 118 were black, 13 were Native American, 12 were Asian and 10 were Hispanic.

"We wonder if there are more minority students who aren't reported as truants," said Alcena Boozer, former Grant High School teacher, counselor and administrator, who built the program and corrected it in its first year. Some students may have simply slipped through the cracks, she said.

Girls were nearly as likely to be truant as boys, with 237 boys and 208 girls referred to the school District's new truancy prevention program, and students from low-income neighborhoods were far more likely to have poor school attendance than those from middle-class communities.

The overwhelming majority of truants came from North Portland (169, or 38 percent) and Northeast Portland (128, or 29 percent).

"I have concluded that the unsung heroes in this District are the people who work in the schools in North Portland," said Scott Cunningham, Boozer's 24-year-old assistant.

Just 20 students were referred to the program from Northwest, 99 from Southeast and 29 from Southwest Portland.

Truants came from every grade level, kindergarten through high school, with the highest numbers at the ninth grade and a sharp dropoff after that.

Boozer said the older students were easier to work with because they had more options available — General Educational Development certificates (GEDs) and alternative programs, both inside and outside the public school system.

When it comes to deciding whether to stay in school, "We think that the critical time is probably the middle school years," Boozer said.

Boozer and Cunningham said they feel good about the successes they have had during the program's first year. Out of the caseload of 445, of whom 80 percent were referred by school administrators, 193 have continued in public schools, 74 have enrolled in private alternative schools and 104 were awaiting placement in alternative programs.

They were unable to locate 28 students, 18 moved, 16 refused services and 36 withdrew from school. Fourteen entered drug and alcohol programs, 21 ran away from home, 18 entered General Educational Development programs, 14 transferred to other public schools, 13 enrolled in home study programs and three were placed in home and hospital programs.

Most of the students referred to the program had missed at least 10 days of school, and many had longstanding attendance problems. The students referred were generally those whom school attendance clerks or administrators had been unable to contact through notes or phone calls. Many of the students Boozer and Cunningham tracked down have no telephones, and some families were just a step ahead of the landlord or bill collector and not eager to be found.

The two put hundreds of miles on their cars each week making home visits, and usually devoted one or two evenings a week to contacting parents who worked during the day.

Once family problems were dealt with, young children generally were eager to return to school, Boozer said, but by middle-school age some children had a well-entrenched hostility to schooling. Consultations between the Project Return staff and school personnel were aimed at explaining home situations and helping teachers ease the way back in for troubled students.

"Once the school staff people were aware of the problem," Boozer said, "we found they were more than willing to offer extra support."

APPENDIX C:

Periodical Reprints:

"A Streamlined Truancy Sweep Program That Really Works",
Police Chief, January, 1985

"Focus on the Dropout",
Cities in Schools Newsletter, Spring, 1985

Police Chief Ja '85

A Streamlined Truancy Sweep Program That Really Works

By JOSEPH T. ROUZAN JR. and LYLE KNOWLES

Among the most disconcerting things to a caring community are juvenile delinquency and school truancy. Many public administrators believe that the "open school campus" policies of many school districts, combined with the lack of leadership and discipline by school administrators and teachers, have contributed directly to the rising incidence of these problems and other crimes in and around school campuses. Unfortunately, too few of us have rigorously attacked the problem with comprehensive programs and commitment.

Most law enforcement agencies serving areas with public school truancy problems have, from time to time, implemented various types of truancy sweeps to get youngsters off the streets. Such efforts are designed both to maintain continuity in the students' education and to control daytime crimes.

Depending on police department and school district policies, truant students might be returned to school, taken home, or transported to the police station and the parents called to come pick up their child. In some instances, truants are booked and turned over to juvenile officers. Depending upon the situation, probation, social services or the courts might become involved. Thus, there is no one resource for police to call upon to handle truants, and the processing and documentation of such incidents can become laborious and time-consuming.

Any program conceived, planned and implemented to prevent and/or reduce juvenile delinquency as it relates to school truancy must be affordable, safe and effective. The City of Inglewood, Calif., having decided to aggressively pursue the elimination of these problems, devised a plan that met these criteria. Project HOPE—"Helping Others Pursue Education"—is a successfully planned and implemented multi-agency truancy control project.

After initial processing by Project HOPE Center staff, students are put through a program of intensive counseling and make-up studies designed to get them back on the track. The classroom atmosphere is at least as disciplined and demanding as in the regular schools.

The Inglewood Unified School District (IUSD) includes two high schools and has a district enrollment of 14,300. In the year before Project HOPE, the school district lost more than $700,000 in state aid as a result of student absences. Police estimate that truant juveniles may be responsible for up to 50 percent of daytime crimes. In Inglewood, about 80 percent of the parents of school-attending children work outside the home.

A major change in California's legal and policy related processing of juveniles occurred in the mid-1970s, wherein habitual truants are referred to a school attendance review board (SARB), which may adjudge them to be wards of the juvenile court. Thus, school truants are rarely arrested and booked.

PROJECT HOPE

Project HOPE is a cooperative effort of five public agencies—the school district, the Los Angeles County Probation Department, the Los Angeles County Department of Social Services, the Inglewood Superior Court Juvenile Judges and the Inglewood Police Department. The goals of this combined effort are to ensure that young people stay in school and get an education, and to impact daytime crimes.

Project HOPE started on the first day of school in September 1983, with police officers assisting school security personnel in picking up and transporting truants to the Project Center. The Project Center is staffed full-time by a director, counselor, teacher, secretary, security guard and a county probation officer.

After initial processing by center st[illegible] students are put through a program of intensive counseling and make-up studies designed to get them back on the track. The classroom atmosphere is at least as disciplined and demanding—if not more so—than in the regular schools. Truants are expected to work, study and produce.

The project counselor explores the attitudes and family problems that lead to truant behavior, and parents or guard[illegible] are asked to come in for a conference. The center also acts as a referral agency for families that need counseling in mental health, parenting, welfare or other long-term counseling.

If all efforts fail, the staff probation officer directs the youth to a hearing in juvenile court. The court holds daily sessions to ensure that recalcitrant youngsters get immediate attention.

Program Evaluation

The IUSD Project HOPE end-of-year report showed that 1,745 truant students were processed during the 1983-84 school year. IUSD security brought in 782 students and the IPD brought in 963. For the police department, patrol officers brought in the majority of students; however, truants were also brought in by detectives, the gang unit and metro over the course of the school year.

The impact on daytime crimes was evaluated by looking at residential burglaries, auto burglaries, strongarm robberies and grand theft auto. These crimes were selected based upon their potential relationship to truancy and preliminary analyses done earlier in the year.

The time periods extended from the first day of school in September through the last day of school in June for the 1982-83 and 1983-84 school years. 1982-83 was used as a baseline or comparison year, during which time routine truancy sweeps were made by police without the advantage of a Project HOPE Center.

Only school days were included for analysis and Christmas vacations were eliminated. Focus was upon the times that students would normally be legitimately in

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LYLE KNOWLES is the senior crime analyst at the Inglewood Police Department and is a reserve police officer with that agency. He has held faculty positions at several universities in the Los Angeles area and has served as a consultant to law enforcement agencies for 16 years. He holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and mathematics from the University of Arizona, and an M.S. and Ph.D. in educational psychology from the University of Southern California.

or around the school areas, and only crimes reported from 7 a.m. through 5 p.m. were considered.

Geographical areas analyzed included the entire city of Inglewood, and the areas within six to eight blocks of each of the two high schools—Inglewood High and Morningside High.

Comparison of the school year without Project HOPE (1982-83) and the year with Project HOPE (1983-84) for the entire City of Inglewood showed that daytime residential burglaries decreased 32 percent. Auto burglaries were down 64 percent, strongarm robberies decreased 45 percent and grand theft auto dropped 36 percent.

Analysis of the area around Inglewood High School revealed that residential burglaries dropped 36 percent, auto burglaries 77 percent, strongarm robberies 47 percent and grand theft auto 22 percent. Examination of the Morningside High School area showed a 43 percent decrease in residential burglaries, an 87 percent decrease in auto burglaries and a drop of 13 percent in strongarm robberies. Grand theft auto was down 70 percent.

Even when allowance is made for the approximate 9 to 10 percent decrease in Part I crimes overall for Inglewood over the past two years, the above decreases are more than substantial. The results strongly suggest that Project HOPE had a very positive influence in decreasing daytime crimes during the 1983-84 school year.

Cost Effectiveness

In terms of costs, the IUSD appropriated $105,000 for Project HOPE's first year of operation. Any costs to the police department in processing more truants than in previous years were offset by the streamlined method incorporated into the project. Police simply picked up truants, took them to the Project HOPE Center and made an entry in their Officer's Daily Log.

On the benefit side, IUSD offices estimate that the loss in state aid as a result of student absences for the 1983-84 school year was approximately $450,000—$250,000 less than was lost during the [illegible] school year.

As far as the decrease in crimes and monetary savings to Inglewood residents, average values of property taken during the 1983-84 school year in Inglewood were as follows: residential burglary, $1,445; auto burglary, $562; strongarm robbery, $211; and grand theft auto, $3,412.

Assuming that daytime target crime figures for the 1982-83 school year would have remained approximately the same for the 1983-84 school year had Project HOPE not intervened, the difference in the reported crimes for the two years for the city gives a rough estimate of "prevented" crimes. Drops in crimes were: residential burglaries 175 to 119; auto burglaries 67 to 24; strongarm robberies from 128 to 71; and auto thefts from 164 to 105. Multiplying these decreases by their respective average values listed above gives an estimated savings in each crime area. Project HOPE resulted in an approximate $320,000 savings to Inglewood residents through crime reduction during the 1983-84 school year.

It should be noted that several other crime control programs were operating partially and concurrently with Project HOPE, such as Neighborhood Watch and several short-term patrol task force activities. Although the entire impact on crime reduction during the period examined cannot be attributed to Project HOPE alone, the evaluation focus on particular crimes, locations and times shows the program to be a major—if not the main—contributor to the positive outcome.

Conclusions

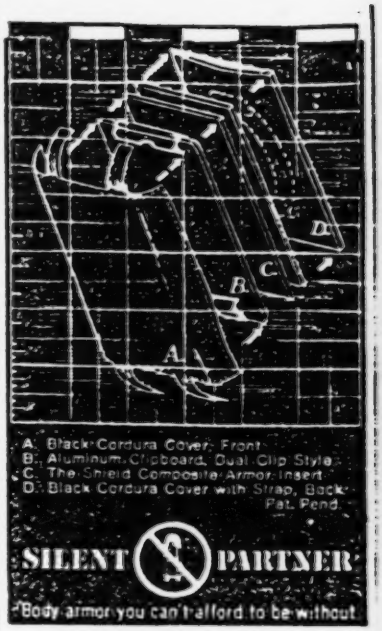
According to criminal justice authorities, community values are currently reflecting a "get tough" attitude about crime. Thus, current criminal justice programs tend to be judged by four criteria: Are they tough? Are they safe? Are they affordable? And do they work?

Project HOPE might be considered "tough" in that truants were given little leeway in terms of their being processed. They were promptly placed back into the educational environment from which they had strayed. The project was safe in that initial handling was done by school security personnel or law enforcement officers. Follow-up processing was performed by professionals at the Project HOPE Center or by the courts.

The earlier cost benefit analysis strongly suggests that the program was certainly affordable; in fact, it more than paid for itself from at least two perspectives—increases in state aid and savings to potential victims of crimes.

Does it work? The 1,745 truant students returned to the learning environment are testimony to this. These students are immediately put back to work on their studies. Only about 1 percent of the truant students were taken into custody at the IPD jail. Thus, almost all students were kept in the educational system rather than being placed into the already overburdened criminal justice system. And the significant decreases in daytime crimes of burglary, robbery and grand theft auto completes the answer to the question, "Does the program work?"

Project HOPE has met—and in many cases exceeded—its objectives during its first year of operation. The collaborative efforts of the public schools, the police, social services, probation and the courts have been successful in orchestrating this streamlined truancy control project. •



A. Black Cordura Cover: Front
B. Aluminum Clipboard, Dual Clip Style
C. The Shield Composite Armor Insert
D. Black Cordura Cover with Strap, Back
Pat. Pend.

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Newsletter

Volume 1, Number 1
Spring 1985

Cities in Schools

Robert Baldwin, Chairman of the Board, Cities in Schools (left) and Barbara Bush listen as Charles Keller, Capital Cities Television introduces the TV documentary "Dropout."

Cities in Schools hosts

"FOCUS ON THE DROPOUT"

Anita Brown

Cities in Schools receives inquiries daily: From parents who realize their children are falling behind in school work and in danger of dropping out. From dedicated teachers who are frustrated by disruptive behavior and overcrowded classrooms, and feelings of helplessness when they encounter students with myriad health and personal problems which the school cannot solve. From community volunteers, civic and business leaders and others who want to do "something" about the dropout crisis.

On March 28 and 29 the national office of Cities in Schools responded to some of these concerns by inviting 100 prominent women from across the nation to come to Washington, DC to discover what they can do about the dropout problem in their local communities.

(Continued on page 4)

A note from the EVP

Doug Johnston

By way of introduction, I am pleased to explain the purpose of this and continuing newsletters.

CIS National is only as good as the information it receives from the cities it serves—that is where the students are, that is where reality is. While my trips to the field to date have been very informative, it has become clear to me that more is needed.

The purpose of this newsletter is to establish an effective channel of communication to, from and among the cities. We hope to share the good ideas and innovative approaches of various projects across the country, as well as impart what is going on at National.

With the increased visibility generated by the "Dropout" documentary, it is more important than ever that we stay in close communication. Not only must we coordinate our responses to the many inquiries which are already coming in, but we need in more general terms to increase our cohesiveness and effectiveness as an organization across the board. Our task of helping the nation's youth should command no less.

I look forward to meeting all of you in the coming months and pledge National's commitment to assisting you in your efforts as best we can.

"FOCUS ON THE DROPOUT"

Errol Arthur, Director CIS, Terrell Jr. High School

Minnie N. Johnson, Principal, Terrell Jr. High School

(Continued from page 1)

White House Briefing

"Focus on the Dropout" began with a briefing at the White House where Secretary of Education, William Bennett, and Alfred Regnery, Administrator of the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, discussed how the critical dropout problem affects local communities. Maurice Weir, CIS Vice President for Special Projects, talked about adolescent pregnancy and parenthood: the major reasons teenage girls drop out of school. He also shared some encouraging statistics and case histories based on his experiences with CIS' successful Adolescent Pregnancy Program.

"Fiesta Luncheon"

Following the White House briefing, the group was treated to lunch at Terrell Junior High School where a Cities in Schools program has operated since 1977. Hosted by Terrell's principal, Minnie N. Johnson and Errol Arthur, Director of the CIS program at Terrell, this segment of "Focus on the Dropout" provided an example of a working public/private partnership. Luncheon speakers attested to the ways a community can work together to keep our youth in school. Speakers included CIS students and parents; Georyia McMurray, Deputy General Director, Community Service Society of New York; and CIS President Bill Milliken.

Even our luncheon "catering service" demonstrated coordinated delivery of services. Two D.C. Public School cafeteria staffs planned and prepared an "impressive lunch" buffet!

Terrell students, positioned one per table, discussed their experiences in an inner city school with the special guests from the corporate, governmental, educational and entertainment communities. One guest, a Washington lobbyist and former Congressional aide, arranged for an "inside" tour of the Capitol for several Terrell students during spring break.

Barbara Bush Reception

After lunch, the women were shuttled to the home of the Vice President and Mrs. George Bush for a reception and "sneak" preview of the TV documentary "Dropout." The film, which highlights Cities in Schools

Phillip Frazer, Student, Terrell Jr. High School

White House Briefing. Left to right, J. Douglas Holladay, Office of Public Liaison, White House; William Bennett, Secretary, Department of Education; Alfred S. Regnery, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and Maurice E. Weir, Cities in Schools, Inc.

programs in Atlanta, New York and Washington, DC inspired the group by demonstrating how localities can attack the dropout problem.

Hostess Barbara Bush, an enthusiastic supporter of Cities in Schools since 1981, pointed out that "Cities in Schools is an outstanding example of innovative public/private cooperation. I encourage more to join in the effort to help reverse the disheartening trend of school dropouts in our nation."

Tour of Pregnancy Program

On Friday morning, some of the guests toured the CIS Adolescent Pregnancy Program in northwest Washington. APP Director, Ed St. Clair and his staff shared their experiences and fielded questions from the group.

Results

As a result of the "Focus on the Dropout" experience, several women have indicated a desire to mobilize efforts in their home towns by hosting home meetings, speaking at community and school forums and assisting with local fundraising.

Mari Coleman, Student, Terrell Jr. High School

CIS Moves to the "Most Livable City in the United States"

What is the "most livable city in the U.S."? According to Rand Corporation, its Pittsburgh!

A new Cities in Schools program was launched in Pittsburgh at a gala fundraising dinner on April 10th. Although the program was initiated in two Pittsburgh public schools earlier this year, the dinner at the Pittsburgh Hilton served as the official kickoff of the effort, according to Fran Fetterolf, chair of the special event.

Mrs. Barbara Bush, a strong advocate for Cities in Schools, keynoted the occasion. Recounting some of her visits to CIS Sites in Atlanta, Houston and Washington, DC, she noted that "one of the most valuable elements of this program is its adaptability to the needs and resources of various communities." The wife of the Vice President noted the Administration's support of the program announcing a gift to Cities in Schools, Inc. from the Presidential Inaugural Committee.

The dinner, hosted by the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation, also featured entertainment by another long-time friend of Cities in Schools, Burt Bacharach, who donated his time for the occasion.

Five prominent Pittsburgh leaders were honored for their contributions: Mayor Richard Caliguiri; Art Rooney, owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers; School Superintendent Richard Wallace; Alice Carter, education director, Pittsburgh Urban League; and Douglas Danforth, chairman, Westinghouse Electric Corporation.

Barbara Bush